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GENERAL ASSEMBLY
Fiftieth session
Agenda items 20 (b), 42 and 44
STRENGTHENING OF THE COORDINATION OF HUMANITARIAN AND DISASTER RELIEF ASSISTANCE OF THE UNITED NATIONS, INCLUDING SPECIAL ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE: SPECIAL ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE TO INDIVIDUAL COUNTRIES OR REGIONS
QUESTION OF PALESTINE
THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST

SECURITY COUNCIL
Fifty-first year

Identical letters dated 1 April 1996 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the General Assembly and to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit a letter dated 29 March 1996 addressed to me by H.E. Mr. Yasser Arafat, President of the Palestinian Authority and Chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization (see annex).

I would be grateful if the contents of the letter could be brought to the attention of the members of the General Assembly under agenda items 20 (b), 42 and 44, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Boutros BOUTROS-GHALI

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ANNEX

[Original: Arabic]

Letter dated 29 March 1996 from H.E. Mr. Yasser Arafat, President of the Palestinian Authority and Chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization

I have the pleasure to convey to you, on behalf of the Palestinian people and on my own personal behalf, the sincerest expressions of gratitude and deep appreciation for the positions you have taken in support of Palestinian national rights and of the dedicated efforts we are making for the continuation of the peace process and the implementation of the agreements concluded with the Israeli Government for the achievement of a just, lasting and comprehensive peace that will ensure security and stability for all the peoples and States of the Middle East region.

We are addressing ourselves to you, Mr. Secretary-General, in the difficult and critical circumstances in which we find ourselves, in order to assure you once again that we reject and condemn the policy of blockade and closure being pursued by the Government of Israel and to convey to you our extreme displeasure and great concern at the dire consequences the blockade measures are having and at the ongoing closures that have been imposed by Israel on the entire Palestinian people in the areas subject to the Palestinian National Authority.

The general security blockade the Israeli Government has imposed on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, its reoccupation of areas from which Israeli forces had previously been withdrawn and its failure to withdraw from the city of Hebron in accordance with the timetable agreed upon at Taba and Washington are in flagrant violation of all international covenants, conventions and customs. We consider such blockade and closure as tantamount to the declaration of a state of war against the Palestinian people, a people that have chosen the road of peace but that for more than a month have been subjected to the worst and most unjust form of collective punishment, to say nothing of the starvation of children, women and the elderly and contempt for basic rights that should be respected in the same manner as human rights in all countries of the world.

I appeal to you, on behalf of the Palestinian people, on behalf of the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Palestinian National Authority, and on my own personal behalf, to intervene in person with a view to putting an end to the unjust Israeli measures of blockade and closure. I hope that you will bring this matter to the urgent and immediate attention of the Security Council and General Assembly of the United Nations in view of the dangers to which the persistence of this devastating situation can give rise, inasmuch as the measures taken by Israel constitute a flagrant violation and gross breach of all the agreements concluded between us and the Israeli Government and threaten to wreck the entire peace process. Peace, Mr. Secretary-General, is not the quest of the Palestinians alone but is a pressing need and a basic quest for the international community, for Arabs and for Israelis equally.

In conveying to you once again our pride in and deep appreciation for your dedicated and constructive efforts and the conspicuous and honourable positions you have taken in support of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, I am hopeful that your worthy endeavours will be crowned with success so that we may achieve the desired peace based on justice, equality and respect for human rights.

(Signed) Yasser ARAFAT
President of the State of Palestine
Executive Chairman of the Palestine
Liberation Organization
President of the Palestinian National
Authority